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# Ruark

## Audio R2 Mk4



A premium radio system that looks and sounds stunning? Count us in

**I**t would be reductive to call the Ruark Audio R2 Mk4 just a radio. Yes, it is an excellent radio with FM/DAB/DAB+ tuners, internet radio and alarms all part and parcel. And it looks like a radio, albeit a very luxuriously designed one; but, like many modern radios, it can do so much more. From wireless streaming via Bluetooth and supported music apps to physical wired connections, the Ruark R2 Mk4 is very much a modern music system that can compete against any premium wireless speaker.

With its rather hefty price tag of £479, you would hope it feels, sounds and overall performs better than you might expect "just a radio" to do, as well. Happily, it does.

So much of the Ruark R2's appeal lies in its stylish, sleek design that exemplifies the modern-retro trend. The R2 would look at home in any space, on a kitchen counter, bedside table, shelf - you could even have it as your main audio system.

The sturdy cabinet is made for sound quality as well as beauty. The damped polymer cabinet is acoustically tuned, while the rounded edges, handcrafted slatted wood grille and bonded glass display are made to a very high quality.

The glass display spans the width of the cabinet, but the actual TFT colour screen for showing the time, source, station/track/artist information is restricted to a small corner on the left-hand side. However, it is wonderfully crisp and clear, and the text is easy to read even from across the room.

The R2 is powered by 18 watts of Class A/B amplification, with two 75mm of Ruark's own NS+ (NeutralSound+) full-range drivers for stereo sound. There are two small bass ports on the

**Its sleek, stylish design is on point with the modern-retro trend**

### TECH SPECS

- **Radio** FM/DAB/DAB+
- **Bluetooth?** Yes
- **Connections** 3.5mm headphone, 3.5mm aux in, USB-C
- **Dimensions (hwd)** 18.5 x 34 x 15cm
- **Weight** 2.9kg

## WHAT HI-FI?

★★★★★

underside of the unit. No matter what surface we place the R2 on, there is enough space for the downward-firing ports to operate without feeling restricted or cramped.

### Great looks, great sound

Connecting the R2 to wi-fi not only gives you access to thousands of global internet radio stations at your fingertips but will also make it easy to stream from your music streaming services. The R2 has built-in support for Spotify Connect, Amazon Music and Deezer. Those with Apple Music or Tidal can use the R2's Bluetooth input. FM and DAB/DAB+ tuners come as standard, and you can save eight presets for each. Ruark caters to physical connections alongside the wireless ones. There's a 3.5mm auxiliary input for connecting external audio sources and a 3.5mm headphone jack.

If you aren't charmed by the Ruark R2 Mk4's looks and feature set so far, you will be once you start playing music on it. Whether it's radio, Bluetooth streams or podcasts, it sounds hugely enjoyable.

The R2 has that naturally rich, weighty and expressive sound signature that we have come to know and love from Ruark. Radio stations come through clear and punchy, and the R2 has a full-bodied

approach that makes even the lower-quality digital stations pleasant to listen to.

Play better-quality stations or stream songs from your favourite music app, and you will get solidity, detail and dynamic expression in spades. Yes, the R2 is a shade on the warm side of neutral, but never so far as to colour the natural tone and feeling of the songs we play, regardless of genre.

Underneath that genial, likeable manner is impressive sonic prowess for a product of this type. There are no harsh edges to that smooth treble; there is ample headroom for higher notes to soar. For what is a fairly compact unit, the sound is surprisingly big and spacious, and it can reach decently loud volumes without getting too strained or losing composure. The musical cohesion of a song remains intact and it is a compelling listen even at lower volumes.

Voices in particular thrive through the R2. This is obviously an important aspect for talk radio and podcasts, and the R2's natural warmth and textural depth lend so much life through the midrange, which sits ever so slightly forward in the presentation compared with some rivals.

If you're after a high-quality music system that looks great, is lovely to use and sounds wonderful, the Ruark R2 Mk4 should be at the top of your wishlist. It's the kind of product that could - and should - be considered alongside any budget hi-fi separates as a more lifestyle (but still very hi-fi-sounding) alternative. It may seem pricey for a radio system, but the Ruark offers so much more and it has the musical prowess to justify its price tag.

**"It's a product that could be considered alongside any budget hi-fi separates as a more lifestyle, but still hi-fi, alternative"**

## WHAT HI-FI?

**RATING** ★★★★★

### SOUND



### FEATURES



### BUILD



### FOR

- Rich, detailed sound
- Impressive dynamics, timing and texture
- Beautiful design

### AGAINST

- Hi-res audio and AirPlay 2 support would have been nice

### VERDICT

A beautifully made and great-sounding radio-streaming system that is a joy to use